

# CHAPTER 4



## McCARTHYISM AND COLD WAR Diplomatic Security in the 1950s

**The Division of Security (SY)** no sooner had gained its organizational structure than Joseph McCarthy, the junior Senator from Wisconsin, asserted that Communists had infiltrated the Department of State. Behind McCarthy's February 1950 charges and the support he received was the Republicans' anger over the Truman Administration's handling of the intensifying Cold War and domestic loyalty issues. During 1949, China fell to the Communists, and the Soviets successfully tested an atomic bomb; meanwhile, in early 1950 new revelations emerged about Soviet espionage in the United States.

McCarthy's accusations triggered a series of events that defined the Division of Security's course for the next decade. Three consequences resulted from McCarthy's charges. First, as Congressional committees called several current and former Department of State officers and advisers to testify and answer charges about their loyalty, the Department redoubled its efforts on background investigations of employees. Second, one Department official's reluctant admission inadvertently triggered a purge of homosexuals from the Department. Third, a Congressional subcommittee studied physical security at U.S. posts overseas, and the subcommittee's highly favorable report led to increased resources for SY and overseas security.

While McCarthy focused public and Congressional attention on Department personnel, U.S. Government officials increasingly worried about the potential threats posed by basic diplomatic customs. U.S. officials feared that the Soviets and their allies might exploit diplomatic immunities in order to undertake espionage or gain an advantage over the United States. The Department of State and other federal agencies reexamined many diplomatic practices, including the routes of foreign couriers and the contents of diplomatic baggage. U.S. officials worried that Soviet Bloc diplomats would acquire advanced U.S. technology and gather public information about the United States and its facilities, information that U.S. officials could not reciprocally obtain in the Soviet Union. As the decade of the 1950s drew to a close, Cold War diplomatic security concerns were pervading all aspects of diplomatic practice, and in the process, SY became entrenched as a necessary office in the Department.



*Figure 1: Senator Joseph McCarthy (R-WI) speaking on his charges of Communist infiltration of the Department of State at the March 9, 1950, subcommittee hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. McCarthy's charges set in motion a series of changes in the Department that resulted in creation of a larger Office of Security (SY) with more resources and responsibilities. Although McCarthy offered different figures for the number of Communists in the Department, his numbers were derived from testimony by Department of State officials and Division of Security files two years earlier. Source: © Associated Press.*

## 🌀 *McCarthy's Charges* 🌀

On February 9, 1950, fears that Communists had penetrated the U.S. Government crystallized when Senator Joseph McCarthy (R-WI) announced that he possessed a list of 205 members of the Communist Party who were “working and shaping policy” in the Department of State. Speaking before the Ohio County Women’s Republican Club in Wheeling, West Virginia, McCarthy accused Alger Hiss of having “sold out the Nation” and revived old charges against John Stewart Service, who had been arrested in the *Amerasia* case. Linking both men to the fall of China to the Communists, McCarthy said that although the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) had arrested Service for passing “secret State Department information” to the Communists, Service had not been dismissed from the Department. Instead, the Department of State named Service as the next U.S. Consul General in Calcutta, which McCarthy described as “the most important listening post in the Far East.” (McCarthy omitted the fact

that a grand jury had unanimously rejected an indictment against Service.)<sup>1</sup>

McCarthy continued to level his accusations in a series of speeches, but the number of Communists in the Department of State often changed. On February 10, in Salt Lake City, he declared that “57 card-carrying members of the Communist Party” worked in the Department, an accusation he repeated in Reno on February 11.<sup>2</sup> Also on that day, McCarthy sent a telegram to President Truman, citing the 57 Communists (whom he did not name), and demanded that Truman address the issue or risk having the Democratic Party labeled as a “bed-fellow of International Communism.” Then on February 20, on the Senate floor, McCarthy declared that there were “81 loyalty risks” in the Department of State, and proceeded to describe each case.<sup>3</sup>

McCarthy’s numbers—205, 57, and 81—were inconsistent, but not fictitious. The numbers were derived from testimony by Department of State officials and Division of Security files. An SY memorandum admitted in April that the “81” figure that McCarthy presented to the Senate was drawn from the “108 Cases,” which had been derived from SY files by a team of House of Representatives researchers in 1947. That group found 108 employees of questionable loyalty working for the Department. The “57” figure was

also from the 108 cases; Deputy Under Secretary for Administration John E. Peurifoy had testified to Congress in March 1948 that 57 of the 108 still worked for the Department.<sup>4</sup> The number “205” was also derived from SY figures. In 1946, Robert L. Bannerman’s Security Office and the Department’s Screening Committee had flagged 284 “security risks.” Secretary of State James F. Byrnes reported this to Congress in July 1946, noting that the Department had dismissed 79 of the 284, leaving 205 possible risks. As the Senate’s Committee on Foreign Relations emphasized, McCarthy’s “information was beyond all reasonable doubt...a ‘dressed up’ version of material” previously presented to Congress. Yet McCarthy had so effectively re-packaged the numbers that it was several weeks before Department of State officials determined

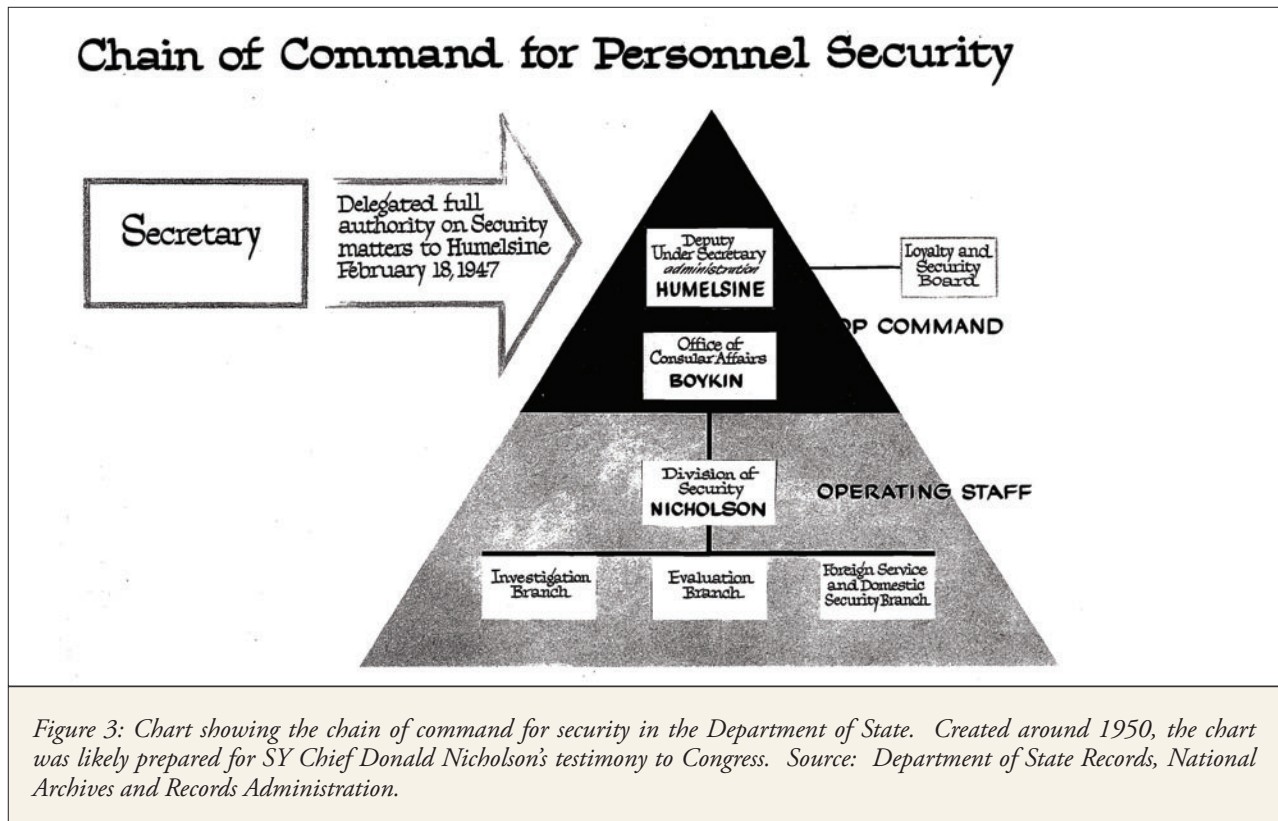
their origins. By then, the Department and several prominent Foreign Service Officers were on the defensive, trying to prove their innocence. As McCarthy asserted, “I don’t answer accusations. I make them.”<sup>5</sup>

The context, not the accuracy of his numbers, gave McCarthy’s charges traction and credibility. In late 1949, six months before McCarthy’s speech at Wheeling, China fell to Mao Zedong’s Communist forces. Also, in the autumn of 1949, the Soviets successfully tested an atomic bomb, several years ahead of what U.S. officials anticipated. Alger Hiss’s libel suit against Whitaker Chambers had evolved into a trial over whether Hiss committed perjury. Two weeks before McCarthy’s speech, a jury convicted Hiss of the perjury charge. Also, on February 11—the same day that McCarthy wired Truman—U.S. newspapers reported that Manhattan Project scientist Klaus Fuchs had confessed to leaking atomic bomb secrets to the Soviets. McCarthy’s charges connected the “loss” of China and the Soviet atomic bomb with “subversion” in the Department of State, giving his accusations credibility despite the ever-changing numbers.<sup>6</sup>

The first consequence of McCarthy’s accusations, which received extensive press coverage, was Senate Resolution 231. On February 22, two days after McCarthy offered an extended exposition on each of the 81 “security risk” cases, the Senate resolved to create a subcommittee that would “conduct a full and complete study and investigation as to whether persons who are disloyal to the United States are, or have been, employed by the Department of State.”<sup>7</sup> Department of State principals traveled to Capitol Hill to rebut McCarthy’s charges. Secretary Acheson and Deputy Under Secretary Peurifoy explained how an individual was determined to be a



*Figure 2: Former Department of State official Alger Hiss before the House Un-American Activities Committee on August 5, 1948. Hiss’ conviction for perjury in 1950 helped to give credibility to McCarthy’s charges that Communists worked in the Department of State. Source: © Associated Press.*



*Figure 4: Ambassador at Large Philip C. Jessup (foreground) at a meeting of U.S. diplomats assigned to Asia. Jessup rebutted McCarthy's charges of being a Communist and presented letters defending him from former Secretary of State George C. Marshall and General Dwight D. Eisenhower. Source: © Associated Press.*

“security risk,” the process of removing security risks from the Department, and the effects of the 1946 McCarran Rider. They noted that the Department had dismissed 202 individuals deemed to be security risks since 1947.<sup>8</sup> Chief of the Division of Security Donald L. Nicholson also testified before Congress, and thoroughly described the process for determining the loyalty and security risk of each Department of State employee and applicant. Nicholson supplemented his testimony with charts that graphically detailed all of the processes.<sup>9</sup>

Despite his charges, McCarthy faced initial embarrassments. In a Senate Committee meeting on March 8, McCarthy referred to Case #14 of the 81 cases, and said the person was a security risk



because he was “a flagrant homosexual.” Committee chair Senator Millard Tydings (D-MD) asked McCarthy to name the person, knowing full well that Case #14 was Joseph Panuch, former Deputy Under Secretary of State for Administration, and that McCarthy had praised Panuch’s work just two weeks earlier. McCarthy stammered, the Committee descended into partisan arguing, and the meeting ended. McCarthy then raised the accusation of “Red” against Dorothy Kenyon, an honorary delegate to the UN Commission on the Status of Women, but this proved to be a bad choice. Kenyon conducted herself extremely well before the Committee, and McCarthy did not even show up for the hearing. McCarthy then took aim at Ambassador-at-Large Phillip C. Jessup, and this also proved embarrassing. Jessup, a highly respected diplomat, showed up with two letters testifying to his anti-Communism and loyalty to the United States—one from former Secretary of State George C. Marshall, and one from General Dwight D. Eisenhower.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the initial embarrassments, McCarthy benefitted from the Korean War and the discovery of further Soviet espionage. On June 24, the North Koreans crossed the demarcation line, starting the Korean War, and indirectly resurrected the “loss” of China issue in U.S. politics. The war led to the implementation of National Security Council Report NSC-68, written largely by Paul Nitze. NSC-68 cast the U.S.-Soviet struggle as “a basic conflict between the idea of freedom under a government of laws, and the idea of slavery under the grim oligarchy of the Kremlin.” NSC-68 also asserted that the Kremlin would use “whatever means are expedient” in its effort “to bring the free world under its dominion by the methods of the cold war.” In addition, Klaus Fuchs’s confession and subsequent cooperation enabled the FBI to uncover other Soviet spies in the Manhattan Project. Fuchs led the FBI to his handler, Harry Gold, who in turn incriminated Sergeant David Greenglass and his wife. The Greenglasses, in turn, led the FBI to Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. Gold and the Greenglasses cooperated with the FBI, but the Rosenbergs did not and were arrested in the summer of 1950. While Korea revived the “Who lost China?” debate, the Fuchs-Gold-Greenglass-Rosenberg revelations explained how the Soviets had attained the atomic bomb so quickly.<sup>11</sup>

McCarthy continued to level accusations at Department of State employees, but not all of those he accused were as able as Kenyon and Jessup in countering his charges. McCarthy accused Gustavo Duran of having “rabid Communist beliefs” and taking part in “secret Soviet operations in the Spanish Republican Army.” A Spaniard, Duran had fought for the Spanish Republican Army during the Spanish



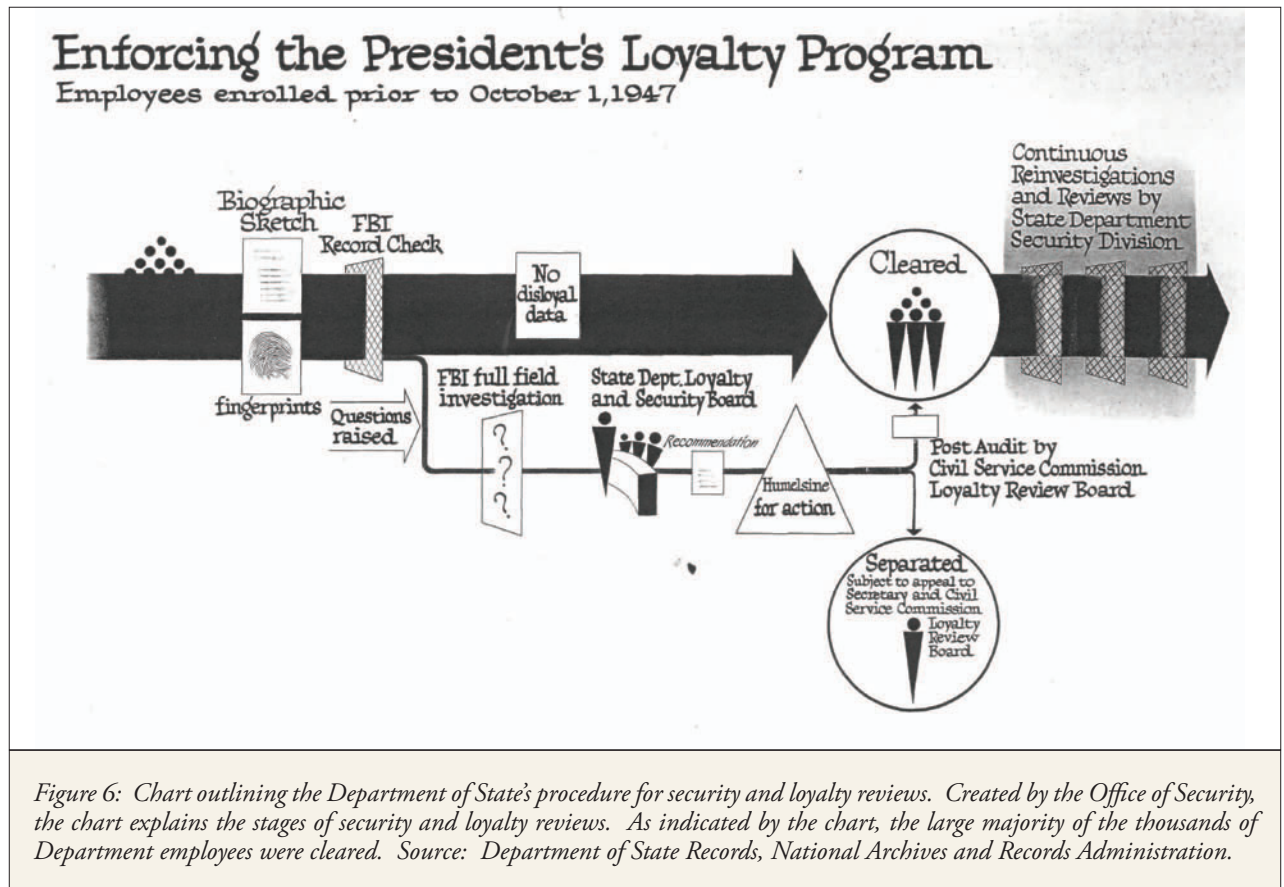
*Figure 5: Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. The arrest, conviction, and execution of the Rosenbergs for treason (giving government secrets to the Soviets) helped to lend credibility to McCarthy’s charges against the Department of State. Source: © Associated Press.*

Civil War (1936-39) before becoming a U.S. citizen. He had worked for the Department from 1943 to 1946, but had moved to the United Nations Survey, Research, and Development Branch. Duran discredited each of McCarthy's charges in a letter to Committee Chairman Tydings, and showed that some accusations were drawn from Spanish government propaganda, written to punish Spanish Republicans for exposing Generalissimo Francisco Franco's connections to the Nazis. It took five years for Duran to clear his name.<sup>12</sup>

McCarthy accused eminent Asian scholar and Department of State and United Nations adviser Owen Lattimore of being "the top espionage agent in the United States, the boss of Alger Hiss." Lattimore initially rebutted McCarthy's charges, but McCarthy and his staff, which included Roy Cohn, pursued the case. They employed false documents, a fraudulent affidavit, and false witnesses. McCarthy even leaked one witness's testimony to the press before the man gave it, so that the claims would appear in the newspapers before they were easily disproved. The Senator also brought forward an ex-Communist informant, who during 3,000 hours of questioning by the FBI did not once mention Lattimore, but now, before the Senate Committee, he suddenly remembered that Lattimore was an important Soviet operative.<sup>13</sup>

Behind the accusations was the "Who lost China?" debate. Lattimore, John Stewart Service, and John Carter Vincent were members of the "China hands," who had opposed U.S. policy supporting Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek. The anger over the loss of China was soon directed against former Secretary of State Marshall, whom McCarthy accused of aiding the policy of Stalin and the Soviet Union, but most Republicans quickly rejected the accusations against Marshall. Chaired by Senator Pat McCarran (D-NV), the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee (SISS) investigated charges in 1951 and 1952 that Communists were trying to influence U.S. foreign policy. The SISS's final report concluded that the Department of State had "lost" China, Lattimore was "a conscious articulate instrument of the Soviet conspiracy," and Vincent and Lattimore were "influential" in altering U.S. policy in 1945 in directions that aided Mao and the Chinese Communists. Vincent was forced out of the Department. Lattimore was indicted for perjury, and 3 years later, when the charges were dismissed, accepted a professorship at Leeds University in England. Service faced a grand jury that voted unanimously against indicting him for leaking classified documents to *Amerasia*, and he endured loyalty investigations in 1946, 1947, and 1949 which cleared him each time. In 1951, the Loyalty Review Board determined that Service was a security risk, and he was subsequently dismissed from the Department. Of the three, only Vincent had been on McCarthy's list of 81 security risks.<sup>14</sup>

Even though a Senate Foreign Relations Committee report accused McCarthy of twisting, misrepresenting, and mischaracterizing information in case files, his charges precipitated an inquiry into who were the security risks in the Department of State, not whether there were security risks. In September 1952, Senator Hiram Bingham, chair of the President's Loyalty Review Board, declared that the Department had "the worst record of any department" regarding employee loyalty investigations.<sup>15</sup> Bingham justified his allegation by pointing to the fact that during his tenure on the Board, the Department of State had found no employees to be disloyal.



Already aware of the allegation, the Department countered that it had found no disloyal employees because it had already implemented a stringent screening system that caught disloyal potential employees before they were hired. In truth, the Department, under heavy scrutiny since the 1945 *Amerasia* revelations, had begun screening and dismissing employees and applicants two years before President Truman set up the loyalty boards for the executive branch. Amid the height of McCarthy's power and credibility, however, the litmus test for any loyalty program was its propensity to unearth "communist" infiltrators, not its competence in screening and rejecting potentially disloyal employees through a screening process. The Division of Security attempted to point this out and to explain its effective screening program, but at the time, this reassured neither Congress nor the American public.<sup>16</sup>

By 1953, when Dwight D. Eisenhower became President, McCarthy had turned his attention and efforts away from the Department of State and toward the U.S. Army. An armistice was declared in Korea, and the Rosenbergs, who were found guilty of treason in March 1951, were executed in June 1953. By 1954, anti-Communist hysteria had abated slightly, and the Senate condemned McCarthy. One lasting result of the experience was that investigations and evaluations were entrenched as key components of the Department's security program.<sup>17</sup>

### *The 'M' Unit*

The second consequence of McCarthy's accusations was a purge of homosexuals from the Department of State. On February 28, 1950, in testimony before the subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Deputy Under Secretary for Administration John Peurifoy tried to avoid discussing the subject of homosexuals. While replying to a question on dismissals, Peurifoy noted that 91 employees in the "shady category" had been dismissed since January 1, 1947. When pressed to define this category, Peurifoy alluded to "moral weakness." He seemed too hesitant to offer specifics, and the number of dismissals was too large for the matter to be easily dropped. Senator Styles Bridges (R-NH) pressed Peurifoy further, and the Deputy Under Secretary finally admitted that the category referred to homosexuals.<sup>18</sup>

The Department was already on the defensive from McCarthy's accusations, but Peurifoy's admission that gays and lesbians were among the Department's workforce doubled its difficulties. During the 1950s, gays and lesbians were viewed as having questionable morals; moreover, revelations of homosexuals in the Department encouraged unfavorable stereotypes of diplomats as "cookie pushers in striped pants" and effete

graduates of elite Eastern schools. The Department tried to counter perceptions that Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) and Department employees were "pinks, snobs, and worse," but such efforts proved largely ineffective. For the next few years, suspected homosexuals were purged from the Department's ranks, sometimes on spurious evidence, because many conflated what they viewed as questionable morals with Communist tendencies, or feared that such people would be more vulnerable to Communist pressures.<sup>19</sup>

In 1950, the Department's Office of Personnel warned Samuel D. Boykin, Director of the Office of Controls, to make "every effort...to prevent the [Foreign] Service from getting the impression that the Department is conducting a 'witch hunt' for homosexual employees. However, SY statistics reveal the extent of the purge. The Department fired 54 people it considered to be homosexuals in 1950, 119 in 1951, and 134 in 1952. The figures dwarf the number of dismissals for more



*Figure 7: Deputy Under Secretary of State for Administration John Peurifoy. Testifying before a Congressional committee, Peurifoy's reluctance to discuss the dismissal of homosexuals inadvertently drew attention to the subject. Homosexuals and Communism were quickly conflated, and a purge of gays and lesbians from the Department occurred during the height of McCarthyism. The Office of Security set up the M Unit to investigate cases of suspected homosexuals. Source: Department of State Files, National Archives and Records Administration.*



straightforward security concerns during the same years: 12 in 1950, 35 in 1951, and 70 in 1952. The trend continued, as 74 of the Department's 107 dismissals resulted from homosexuality alone in the first months of 1953.<sup>20</sup>

The Department insisted that its decision to classify gays and lesbians as extreme security risks was made "entirely apart from any moral judgment." Department officials said that "such individuals are susceptible to blackmail and are exposed to other pressures because of the highly unconventional character of their personal relationships." Even those perceived as homosexual were deemed security risks. The Office of Personnel believed that "latent tendencies can remain dormant for long periods of time – and then break through the surface without prior warning." This belief, in essence, demanded that SY be more aware of an individual's personal tendencies and potential future behavior than the individual was.<sup>21</sup>

SY created the "M" (Miscellaneous) Unit to investigate charges of homosexuality. The M Unit consulted police and vice squad records, and briefed chiefs of mission on how to recognize homosexuality. Staffed by two full-time agents and several part-time staff, the M Unit primarily used personal interviews and an occasional polygraph test (legal at the Department since 1950). In 1953, the M Unit claimed responsibility for 99 separations, and eliminated 27 employees in the first quarter of 1954.<sup>22</sup>

Department officials promised that they would only investigate individuals suspected of homosexuality after a strong case had been developed against them, but many findings were based on highly subjective information. Security instructions required the M Unit to interview all male applicants and note "any unusual traits of speech, appearance or mannerisms" that might indicate sexual deviance. The mere act of frequenting a restaurant or bar known to be frequented by gays and lesbians, or of associating with known homosexuals, was enough to demand a more thorough investigation. One SY official argued that a close review of the ranks was necessary, due to the inadequate investigations and higher levels of tolerance toward homosexuality during the war. As one veteran courier recalled, during the McCarthy Era, "everyone was presumed to be a little light on his feet until proved otherwise."<sup>23</sup>

Department employees began to accuse their colleagues of being gay or lesbian--sometimes anonymously--and the flimsiest of claims could lead to investigations. For example, one female employee accused her supervisor of lesbian tendencies based upon her physical appearance, and the fact that her lunch companions included a woman with "a mannish voice" and another woman who seemed "peculiar." When SY interviewed the accuser, the only corroborating evidence she could muster was that her supervisor gave her "a nauseous feeling." When pressed, the employee confessed, "she really had nothing factual" to offer, it was merely "a suspicion." Having identified one potential homosexual security risk, the employee soon implicated dozens more, basing her accusations on little other than her "feminine intuition," as well as "the effeminate mannerisms of hand" and the "jelly hand shake" of some male colleagues. Although no record of SY's findings on the female employee's accusations was found, her "evidence" was far from credible. It



*Figure 8: Secretary of State Dean Acheson, 1949-1953. During the 1950s, SY provided only “portal-to-portal” protection for the Secretary; that is, Special Agents met the Secretary at his home in the morning, protected him during the day, and escorted him home at night. Source: U.S. Information Service.*

was learned that her supervisor (whom she accused of lesbianism) had placed the employee on 90-days probation for unsatisfactory job performance. The fact that the employee could press her accusations so far, and that SY dedicated time investigating them, is indicative of the atmosphere in the Department.<sup>24</sup>

SY also investigated individuals who fell under the broader category of exhibiting “moral turpitude,” “weaknesses of character,” or “immorality.” The Civil Service Commission insisted that such persons did not merit holding “positions of public trust.” In a letter addressed to the U.S. Senate and SY, one anonymous writer claimed to have discovered “a situation among government employees” that was “worse than homosexuality,” and “part of the communist plot to crack American home morale.” The accuser contended that one Department of State employee had carried on an affair with her superior, broken up his marriage, then filed a claim against her paramour and gone on to carry out liaisons with other married men in London and New York.<sup>25</sup> The Office of Security even debated how to classify an unwed mother, and whether she should be considered a security risk based on the

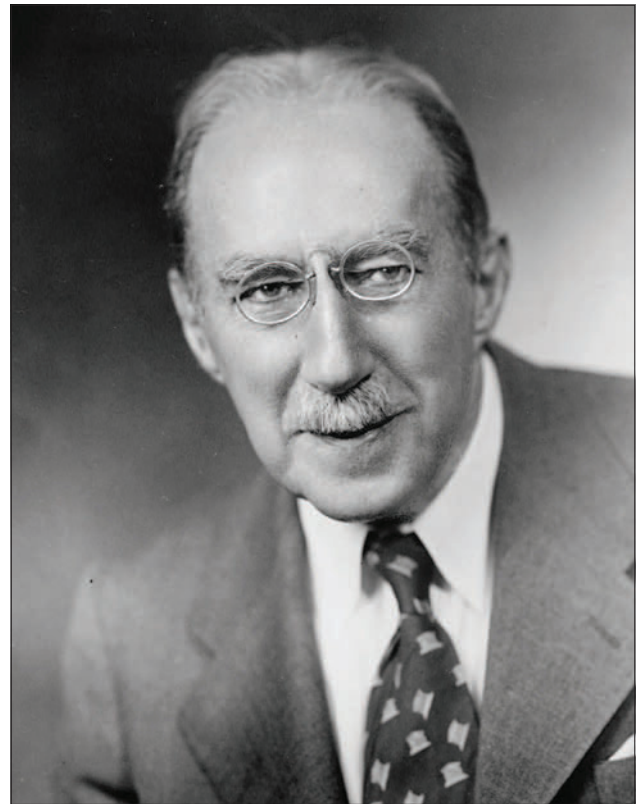
“immorality” of her condition. Otto Otepka, SY’s Chief of Evaluations, argued that such situations did not warrant any attention. If determined to be security risks, he wrote, pregnant women would tarnish the image of the Department’s security apparatus by making it appear “as a court of last resort to pass on the public morals.” The Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Security and Consular Affairs (SCA) R. W. Scott McLeod disagreed. If left unaddressed, he said, the issue of the uninvestigated, unwed mother might elicit “public criticism...that we were not adhering to the laws of society which have been in effect since time immemorial.” McLeod insisted that each case of single motherhood or other moral infractions be investigated and judged on its own merits.<sup>26</sup>

### *The Green and Lodge Report*

The third consequence of McCarthy's charges against the Department was a greater emphasis upon security at U.S. posts overseas. The Senate subcommittee formed in February 1950 to investigate loyalty and security risks in the Department of State created the Subcommittee of Two. Consisting of Senators Theodore F. Green (D-RI) and Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. (R-MA), the Subcommittee of Two was tasked with examining "the practical operations, enforcement, and day-to-day policing of the security program."<sup>27</sup>

Senators Green and Lodge conducted the first Congressional study of overseas physical security and travelled overseas to inspect select posts. The Senators took their task seriously; in fact, Senator Green took "an extremely keen personal interest in the security program." Green and Lodge interviewed every leading officer and division head in SY, several agents in the Washington and New York Field Offices, and most Regional Security Officers in Europe and the Middle East. The Senators flew to Paris and Bonn to meet with RSOs, and SY brought in RSOs from Cairo to meet with the Senators. Green and Lodge also dined with the U.S. High Commissioner John J. McCloy, and discussed security concerns at U.S. posts in occupied Germany. Green and Lodge completed their research within 5 weeks, submitting their report to Congress and the press on June 15, 1950.<sup>28</sup>

Green and Lodge returned most favorably impressed with the Division of Security, its overseas security program, and particularly Regional Security Officers. They recommended expanding SY, and increasing its resources and personnel to prevent Communist infiltration and espionage at U.S. diplomatic facilities abroad. Green and Lodge also requested that the Department give the Division of Security a higher profile: namely, SY should report directly to the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Administration, instead of the Director of the Office of Controls. They asserted that given the "increasing importance of security," the requirement of having SY report to an official who answered directly to the



*Figure 9: Senator Theodore F. Green (D-RI). Senators Green and Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., undertook the first study of diplomatic security. They visited field offices and travelled to Europe to talk with Regional Security Officers. Green took an "extremely keen personal interest" in improving security at U.S. posts overseas. Source: Library of Congress, Biographical File.*



*Figure 10: Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. (R-MA). Senators Lodge and Green urged Department officials to expand and increase security at U.S. posts overseas. They also indicated their willingness to provide extra funds to add more security officers, more equipment, and more training. Department officials recognized how supportive the Senators were. Source: © Associated Press.*

Secretary would provide “first hand encouragement from the top,” and “this is where [SY] belongs.” The Senators also advocated placing a trained, professional security officer at every major U.S. diplomatic post overseas, expanding the Marine Security Guard program by 200 Marines, and increasing the staff at the Washington and New York Field Offices. Green and Lodge further proposed increasing the number of RSOs so that the RSOs could conduct more post security inspections and make additional follow up visits. The Senators also cited the security risks that local national employees presented to U.S. posts. Noting that the Soviets did not rely on local national employees at their embassies, Green and Lodge suggested that the Department replace all local nationals with U.S. citizens.<sup>29</sup>

Implicitly contained in the two Senators’ recommendations was a vision of a radically larger, more prominent Division of Security than the Department, or even SY leaders imagined. Had the Department enacted Green and Lodge’s recommendations in their entirety in 1950, it would have expanded SY to a Bureau of Security that reported directly to the Deputy Under Secretary of State. In their report, Lodge and Green envisioned

Marine Security Guards at every embassy, and full-time security officers at most posts. (Their numbers were estimates of what they anticipated it would take to achieve this.) Expanded Regional Security Offices would have conducted and implemented regular security inspections and upgrades, with a technical security cohort working to defend posts against technical espionage and to maintain continued U.S. technological superiority in countermeasures.

Department officials grasped neither the magnitude of what Lodge and Green recommended nor the depth of the Senators’ enthusiasm and commitment to the improvement of SY and overseas security. They overlooked how supportive Green and Lodge were of the Division of Security and its efforts, and did not recognize that Green and Lodge were willing to add the positions and money needed to implement their proposals. In August 1950, two



months after the report's release, Senator Lodge told Deputy Under Secretary of State for Administration Carlisle H. Humelsine that he was "a trifle put out" that the Department had failed to implement the report's recommendations. Humelsine admitted that he had to do some quick talking to satisfy the Senator. As an immediate step, Humelsine offered to change his title to Deputy Under Secretary for Security and Administration, and change the name of the Office of Consular Affairs to the Office of Security and Consular Affairs. Lodge was pleased; however, Humelsine only changed the name of the office, not his title. Department officials, instead, fixated on one recommendation, which they found to be nearly impossible to implement: replacing all FSNs with U.S. citizen employees. SY and Consular Affairs drew up a 24-page study on why replacing FSNs with U.S. citizens could not be done.<sup>30</sup>

Lodge's admonishment of Humelsine prodded the Bureau of Administration and the Division of Security to act on the Senators' report, albeit not on the scale that the Senators had recommended. After his meeting with Lodge, Humelsine asked Boykin for a presentation detailing how the Department was going to address each recommendation for Senator Lodge, either before the current Congressional session ended or, at the latest, by the start of the new session in January 1951. SY sent the presentation to Humelsine on February 21, 1951, and in it, SY officials requested an additional 47 people, and \$405,000. Congress, however, had already appropriated an advanced authorization of \$193,000, allowing SY to hire another 42 people, and the Department had obtained 300 more Marine Security Guards from the Pentagon.<sup>31</sup>

Green and Lodge recognized that the Department had not grasped their earnest support for improving security and had been sidetracked by their suggestion to replace local nationals. In April 1951, they sent Humelsine a letter, restating their recommendations and re-emphasizing their desire to provide more training to security officers and increase the number of RSOs and Special Agents. Green and Lodge notably pushed



*Figure 11: Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in Saigon, South Vietnam. SY Special Agent Leo Crampsey (on right at rear) provides protection for Secretary Dulles as he meets with senior South Vietnamese officials in March 1956. Source: Bureau of Diplomatic Security Files.*



*Figure 12: Samuel Boykin, Director of the Office of Consular Affairs. Boykin recommended in 1952 that the Division of Security be raised to Office level, and the idea had wide support in the Department. Source: Department of State Records, National Archives and Records Administration.*

replacing local nationals with U.S. citizens to the very bottom of their recommendations, qualifying it with the phrase “insofar as possible.” Upon receipt, Humelsine went down the rearranged recommendations list and noted on one-third of them that the Department lacked the funds to implement them. Humelsine seemed to view the recommendations as “faults,” and did not recognize nor take advantage of the Senators’ support for and willingness to provide additional funding.<sup>32</sup>

A year after the release of Lodge-Green Report, Humelsine thanked the two Senators for their support of the Department’s security program, and to an extent, Humelsine’s “thank you note” was needed. The two Senators had added nearly 100 people to the Division of Security, increasing it by nearly 50 percent, and provided supplemental appropriations that funded numerous security improvements at posts across the world. Green and Lodge greatly expanded the overseas security program, entrenching it as a “pillar” of SY.<sup>33</sup>

### *Division to Office*

The attention that McCarthy drew to employee security at the Department and the efforts of Senators Green and Lodge to improve overseas security led to the elevation of the Division of Security to an Office. The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1952, also called the McCarran-Walter Act, denied entrance to and called for the deportation of immigrants and naturalized citizens engaged in “subversive activities,” primarily current or former Communist Party members and sympathizers. The McCarran-Walter Act gave expanded powers to the Visa and Passport divisions, elevated them to offices, and raised the Office of Consular Affairs to the Bureau of Security and Consular Affairs.<sup>34</sup> The changes, the Act’s many references to security, and attention to Departmental security provided SY strong backing for its request to be raised to office level. When Samuel Boykin, head of the Office of Consular Affairs, recommended elevating SY, Humelsine agreed. On December 23, 1952, the Department established the Bureau of Security and Consular Affairs (SCA), and appointed Boykin as Acting Director.<sup>35</sup>

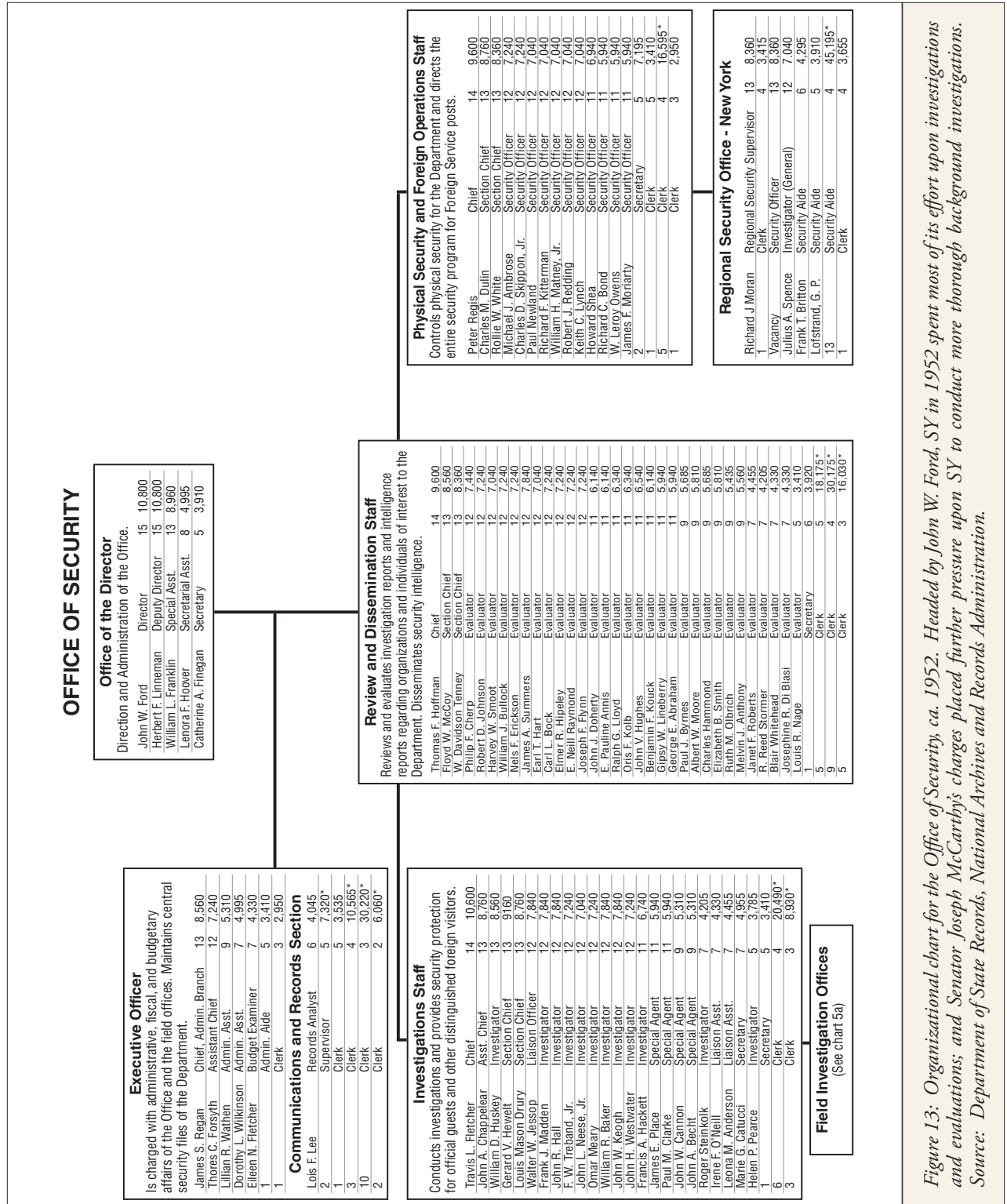


Figure 13: Organizational chart for the Office of Security, ca. 1952. Headed by John W. Ford, SY in 1952 spent most of its effort upon investigations and evaluations; and Senator Joseph McCarthy's charges placed further pressure upon SY to conduct more thorough background investigations. Source: Department of State Records, National Archives and Records Administration.

### *Joseph Bezjian and the Great Seal*

While Green and Lodge pressed the Department to improve overseas security, the discovery of the Great Seal “bug” brought technical security at U.S. posts to the forefront. In their report, Green and Lodge were confident that the United States had not been surpassed in listening device technology. Although bugs had been found in U.S. Embassies in Eastern Europe during the late 1940s, none had been found in Moscow since World War II. Long-time diplomat George F. Kennan noted, “We had long since taught ourselves to assume that in Moscow most walls – at least in rooms that diplomats were apt to frequent – had ears.”<sup>36</sup>

U.S. suspicions increased in the fall of 1951, when a British military officer overheard a conversation between two British diplomats in another room of the British Embassy on his radio receiver. A U.S. military officer had the same experience at the U.S. Embassy. Upon investigation, neither British technical security nor SY’s technical security team of Joseph Bezjian and John W. Ford found anything. In early 1952, the U.S. Embassy used Soviet

workers to remodel Spaso House (the Ambassador’s residence) for the new Ambassador, George Kennan, who believed that this remodeling provided the Soviets with an opportunity to plant listening devices; however, several technical security inspections found nothing.<sup>37</sup>

Joseph Bezjian returned to the Moscow Embassy in September 1952 to conduct a more extensive search for listening devices. Bezjian, fondly nicknamed “the Rug Merchant,” was one of three SO(T)s assigned to the Regional Security Office in Paris under the direction of Alex Prengel (the other two SO(T)s were Fred C. Snider and Hillman “Hank” S. Ford.).<sup>38</sup> Believing that the Soviets had removed the bugs before the previous technical teams had arrived, Bezjian had his equipment shipped in separately, and posed as a “house guest” for 3 days. On September 12, in a pre-arranged plan with Ambassador Kennan, Bezjian listened for a signal frequency as Kennan dictated from a previously sent unclassified despatch, printed in a volume of the Department of State’s *Foreign Relations of the United States* series. Hearing a signal, Bezjian went to the Ambassador’s study, and isolated the bug in a wooden carving of the Great Seal of the United



*Figure 14: The Great Seal Bug. Director of Security John Reilly (right) holds the cavity resonator, and an SY Agent points to where the Soviet listening device (or “bug”) was placed in the wood carving, which hung in the U.S. Ambassador’s official residence in Moscow, Spaso House. SY technical officer Joseph Bezjian discovered the bug with the aid of Ambassador George F. Kennan, who read a published Department document while Bezjian located the origin of the frequency. Bezjian shipped the bug to Washington, and Secretary of State Dean Acheson showed it to President Harry Truman and explained how the bug worked. Truman ordered U.S. Government agencies to develop countermeasures for such technological espionage. Source: Department of State Records, National Archives and Records Administration.*



States, which had been presented to the Ambassador several years earlier as a gift from the Soviet people. The carving consisted of front and back pieces sealed together by plaster. Bezjian opened the carving and discovered a listening device known as a cavity resonator. Operating on a principle similar to a soprano singing a high pitch and breaking a glass, human voices activate the cavity resonator, and the resonator then transmits the voices on a radio frequency. Bezjian removed the cavity resonator from the Great Seal, and that night, he slept with it under his pillow (to prevent theft), then shipped it to Washington the next day. Secretary Acheson showed the device to President Truman, who then directed the Naval Research Laboratory to develop equipment for detecting cavity resonators.<sup>39</sup>

The Great Seal's cavity resonator was not new technology, and in this sense, Senators Green and Lodge were correct when they said that U.S. technology had not been surpassed. However, Western technical security officers had not yet seen cavity resonators employed as espionage devices. Also, the cavity resonator required no electrical current, and therefore no wires. It also did not contain any ferrous materials, and therefore had eluded metal detectors. Bezjian actually found two cavities in the Great Seal. The smaller cavity held the resonator, while the larger cavity, the FBI later determined, had previously housed an older, battery-powered listening device.<sup>40</sup>

Security at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow increased after discovery of the Great Seal bug, but the effectiveness of the increase was probably limited. Shortly afterwards, Kennan was declared *persona non grata*. When Ambassador Charles "Chip" E. Bohlen arrived, he demanded that Sergei, the Soviet caretaker of Spaso House, give him a key to his (Sergei's) apartment. After several weeks, Sergei gave Bohlen the key (it is unclear why U.S. officials allowed Sergei to take so long). Embassy officers found an empty room when they opened the apartment, but it was later determined that Sergei had "helped to organize the bugging of the embassy" from his apartment since the 1930s. In early 1953, the top two floors of the chancery were renovated. Although the now-suspicious U.S. officials posted guards on Soviet workers during the day, Bohlen confessed that they did not post a night watch out of "carelessness and to save money." Discoveries of technical penetration in Eastern bloc nations continued. This led SY officials to believe there were more bugs in the Moscow Embassy, but they continued to find none.<sup>41</sup>

### *Adjusting the Marine Security Guard Program*

Even though the Department of State and the Marine Corps initially anticipated that the Marines' guard duty at U.S. posts overseas would be temporary, the Marine Security Guard (MSG) program instead had expanded rapidly. The Lodge-



Figure 15: Secretary of State Dean Rusk speaks to a graduating class of Marine Security Guards (MSG). During the 1950s, the Department and the Marine Corps made significant changes to the MSG training program, including the addition of an on-the-job component (at Main State) and the development of a Marine Security Guard Handbook. Source: Department of State Records, National Archives and Records Administration.

Green Report, as well as the 1950 Mutual Defense Assistance Program, required the Department to increase the number of Marine guards at its missions with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) partners. Military Assistance Advisory Groups in Asia and the expanding number of military attachés across the world prompted additional demands for Marine guards, largely because overseas military attachés and officials were generating significant amounts of classified documents. By the end of 1953, the initial assignment of 300 Marines had more than doubled, to 676.<sup>42</sup>

As the program expanded, the MSG program suffered a number of “kinks.” Doubts about the Marines’ diplomatic immunity arose, but the Department determined that Marine guards merited the same immunity as the Ambassador and other post members. SY recognized that Marine Security Guards might have to handle Top Secret material during security violations, and soon upgraded the Marines’ security clearance to that level.<sup>43</sup> Worried that discipline would decline among the Marines, the Marine Corps created four regional Officers in Charge to oversee them, locating the regional centers in Paris, Rio de Janeiro, Cairo, and Manila. The Department found that some posts used the Marine guards improperly. After an inspection of the Embassy in Paris, Department inspectors advised cutting the Marine Security Guard detail by 19 men because Embassy officers were using them for messengers, couriers, auto pool drivers, and receptionists.<sup>44</sup>

Despite the benefits that all sides appreciated, the MSG program almost did not survive. Administration of the program was initially scattered across several Department offices, including the Offices of Personnel and Security, and no office wanted full responsibility for it. When Department officials met in 1951 to discuss how to improve the program’s management, the Division of Security was “convinced” that it should not “handle the administrative details.” SY reluctantly accepted the responsibility “for the sake of the program.”<sup>45</sup>

Another reason for the MSG program’s near-disbanding emerged 3 years later, when the Department of State, and SY in particular, expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of training that the Marines were receiving for guard duty. In 1954, Deputy Under Secretary of State for Administration Thruston Morton told the Commandant of the Marine Corps that the training of Marine Security Guards “leaves much to be desired.” SY’s Physical Security division proposed adding an on-the-job component, which would be conducted at the Department of State’s main building (Main State) in order to improve training. Commandant General Lemuel Shepherd dismissed on-the-job training as “impracticable,” but promised to revise the training program. Under Secretary of State for Administration Charles K. Saltzman, Morton’s superior, then sought to “clarify” Morton’s letter. He described the Marines’ training as “inadequate” and insisted upon including an on-the-job component in the training.<sup>46</sup>

Apparently, the Marine Corps’ response was not what the Office of Security and the Bureau of Administration had hoped, and in early 1956, SY and SCA gave serious consideration to switching back to civilian guards. Ultimately, the Department’s decision turned on the fact that the Marine Corps was absorbing part of the program’s cost. An SY memorandum extensively comparing civilian and Marine guard programs suggests that had costs been more equal, the Department might have reverted to civilian guards.<sup>47</sup>

The Department of State's explicit dissatisfaction with MSG training led to revisions to the training program in 1956. An on-the-job component was added, and the first Marine Security Guard Handbook was developed. Only single men were chosen to attend the Marine Security Guard School at Company F Headquarters in Arlington, Virginia. Upon arrival, Marine Corps and SY officers screened each candidate for "suitability." Candidates were given four weeks of intensive training, with courses on Foreign Service organization and regulations, "Communist methods and techniques," protection of dignitaries, international conferences, counterterrorism, U.S. history, "cranks and emergencies," and etiquette (including table manners and seating arrangements). A comprehensive written examination followed, then a second screening of the candidates. The on-the-job component followed. Candidates manned shifts as guards-in-training (under supervision) at the Department of State's main building, enabling instructors to disqualify unsuitable candidates and provide a "better security trained" guard for the field. The rigorous training program had a 25 to 30 percent disqualification rate. By 1956, there were over 730 Marine Security Guards, at more than 90 U.S. missions around the world.<sup>48</sup>

### 🌀 "Getting Tough" under McLeod 🌀

In 1953, Dwight D. Eisenhower assumed the Presidency with a commitment to achieving greater security in the federal government. During the campaign, he had vowed to deal directly and expediently with the issue of employee loyalty, and to this end, Eisenhower issued Executive Order 10450 on April 27, 1953. The order stated that affirming loyalty to the United States was not sufficient in itself to qualify a candidate as suitable for federal employment. The federal government's loyalty program now required that "all persons privileged to be employed in the departments and agencies of the Government, shall be reliable, trustworthy, of good conduct and character," and they should demonstrate an "unswerving loyalty to the United States." E.O. 10450 opened all government employees for re-investigation, not just those who had committed a security breach. It also appeared to expand the grounds upon which an individual could be disqualified for government service, but, in truth, it summarized the developments in loyalty and security investigations that had occurred since 1950, namely allowing the inclusion of "character" as a disqualifier.<sup>49</sup>



*Figure 16: R. W. Scott McLeod (left) and Robert Cartwright. As Director of Security and Consular Affairs, McLeod implemented Executive Order 10450, which enacted the expanded definitions of loyalty, character, and good conduct required for Department employment. McLeod began his tenure by saying that he had fired 16 "moral deviates" and 5 "security risks" just ten days after assuming office. Source: Department of State Records, National Archives and Records Administration.*



*Figure 17: Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, 1953-1959. Secretary Dulles did not embrace SCA Director Scott McLeod's enthusiastic application of the expanded definition of security risks in Executive Order 10450. Dulles opposed McLeod's evaluation of Charles "Chip" Bohlen as a "security risk." McLeod threatened to resign when President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles refused to withdraw Bohlen's nomination as U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union. The Senate also rejected McLeod's evaluation, and confirmed Bohlen. Afterwards, Dulles promised the Senate that he would keep a close watch on McLeod. Source: © Associated Press.*



*Figure 18: John W. Ford, Director of the Office of Security, 1952-1953. Heading SY during the height of McCarthyism, Ford was reassigned after he admitted to Congress that the great pressure to complete SY's huge case load quickly led to less than full field investigations for many cases, and only spot checks for those unlikely to handle classified information. Source: Department of State Records, National Archives and Records Administration.*

The Eisenhower Administration named R. W. Scott McLeod to head the Bureau of Security and Consular Affairs in March 1953. A political appointee from the staff of Senator Styles Bridges (R-NH), McLeod had served as an FBI agent from 1942 to 1949. He was also a confidant of Senator McCarthy, and kept an autographed picture of him on his desk. The new SCA Administrator immediately drew attention to his efforts by announcing publicly that he had fired 16 "moral deviates [sic]" and 5 "security risks" just 10 days after taking office. McLeod's announcement gave the impression that the Truman Administration had been protecting some employees while the Eisenhower Administration was "getting tough" with such security risks.<sup>50</sup>

Under McLeod, the process of investigations and evaluations operated much the same as it had for the past eight years. Security reports flowed into SY from the FBI and other agencies. Based on these reports and its own investigative work, SY had the final authority to reject prospective Department employees by refusing or withdrawing security clearances. Yet SY did not have the power to terminate for disloyalty or unethical security practices persons who were already employed. The Loyalty Security Board, which functioned outside of SY, continued to hold the authority to terminate employees under the President's Loyalty Program.<sup>51</sup>

The new approach to security risks, as defined by E.O. 10450 and pursued by McLeod, allowed the Department of State to redeem itself in the public eye. Statistics from McLeod's tenure as Administrator of SCA give the impression that the Department of State implemented a more effective security and loyalty evaluation program than it had previously.



Secretary of State John Foster Dulles announced that 306 employees had been separated from the Department for security reasons between January 20 (when Eisenhower took office) and September 30, 1953. Of that total, 147 Department employees were terminated after E.O. 10450 went into effect. Although E.O. 10450 did not technically apply to foreign nationals employed by U.S. posts overseas, 178 FSNs were also dismissed for security concerns.<sup>52</sup>

Not everyone in the Eisenhower Administration or the Department of State embraced McLeod's enthusiasm. Less than a month after McLeod assumed leadership of SCA, McLeod, Senator McCarthy, and Senator Bridges clashed with President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles over the nomination of Charles Bohlen as U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union. McLeod brought forward that Bohlen had "close associations with three State Department employees suspected of homosexuality," one of whom was Bohlen's brother-in-law Charles Thayer. Eisenhower

strongly supported Bohlen's nomination, and McLeod threatened to resign when the White House refused to withdraw the nomination. Dulles worried that McLeod would testify on television before the Senate committee, and McCarthy had approached McLeod about doing so, hence Dulles tried to smooth things over. Republican Senator Robert Taft read Bohlen's file, but rejected the charge of "security risk." The Senate confirmed Bohlen, and Dulles promised the Senate that the Department would keep a close watch on McLeod.<sup>53</sup>

The Office of Security came under heavy scrutiny again in early 1953 when John C. Montgomery, the Desk Officer for Finland, was found dead at his Georgetown home. Although the police determined Montgomery had committed suicide, circumstances surrounding his death remained mysterious. When the Department admitted that Montgomery suffered from mental and emotional instability, Congressman Fred E. Busbey of Illinois initiated hearings into the administrative practices, employee investigations, and personnel policies of the Department. SY Director John W. Ford and SCA Administrator McLeod testified at Busbey's behest. Ford admitted that the full field investigation standard, implemented in 1948, had not reached its full working capacity until January 1953, and that the Department's investigative unit was under pressure to complete a large number of cases. SY encouraged quick investigations, and it was customary for investigators to perform only



*Figure 19: Dennis Flinn, Director of the Office of Security, 1953-1956. Flinn, a Foreign Service Officer, served at U.S. Embassy Lisbon during World War II, and at the Embassies in Helsinki, Stockholm, and Canberra after the war. Upon becoming the Director of SY, he reorganized the office to improve security at U.S. posts overseas. Source: Department of State Records, National Archives and Records Administration.*

a spot check on those at a GS-5 equivalent or below. Ford's admissions raised a furor on Capitol Hill, and cost him his job (he was reassigned as Regional Security Officer for Central America). McLeod meanwhile was instructed to centralize the filing system for investigations and impose tighter control over all SY operations.<sup>54</sup>

### *Embassy Security and Reorganizing SY*

When Dennis Flinn replaced Ford as Director of SY in October 1953, he pressed for a greater emphasis on overseas security. Formerly a Deputy Director of the Office of Controls, Flinn recognized that, operationally, SY verged on a “monoculture” of security investigations. Despite the emphasis that Senators Green and Lodge had placed on embassy security, Flinn noted that personnel investigations were overwhelming overseas security officers, and making them essentially the overseas investigative arm of the U.S. Government. In fact, during the previous fiscal year, SY had handled 1,641 cases, involving 3,018 overseas investigations.<sup>55</sup> Overseas security officers, Flinn asserted, were “not able to give even a minimum degree of attention to their basic responsibilities” of raising physical security standards at U.S. missions abroad. Furthermore, of SY's four divisions—Administration, Investigations, Evaluations, and Foreign Operations—only Foreign Operations addressed overseas security. However, Foreign Operations performed little physical security work, and could have easily been renamed Overseas Investigations. In addition, Foreign Operations supervised the New York Regional Office, which did background investigations of U.S. employees to the United Nations.<sup>56</sup>

Flinn considered this state of affairs “bad management and bad administration,” and with McLeod's concurrence, Flinn reorganized SY. He separated physical security into its own division, with William Uanna as its division chief. He also requested and obtained 11 additional positions to improve the implementation

of physical security overseas. Recognizing that technical security required a “professional level” of skills and years of specialized experience, technical security officers were designated as Security Officers (Technical), or SO(T)s. In early 1956, McLeod, on behalf of SY, requested another 15 SO(T)s to better inspect and maintain technical and physical security for U.S. posts. Flinn also improved physical security at the Main State building. He oversaw the installation of a new centrally controlled alarm system for the restricted areas of the building, and implemented procedures ensuring that incoming and outgoing communications were screened for appropriate classification. As Flinn told McLeod,



*Figure 20: William L. Uanna, Chief of the Division of Physical Security. When Flinn reorganized SY in order to place more emphasis on overseas security, he named Uanna as chief to carry out the expansion of security at U.S. posts abroad. Source: Department of State Records, National Archives and Records Administration.*

“purely investigative people never quite understand or appreciate the importance of physical security,” and “they almost always relegate security to a secondary role.” This, he believed, created “false security” because it resulted in an “over-emphasis being placed on investigating individuals” while physical security languished.<sup>57</sup>

Additional factors influenced the shift towards physical security and a lessening focus on investigations. The Democrats’ success in the 1954 Congressional elections prompted a review of the personnel security program. The media, intellectuals, and wider U.S. public expressed concern that the aggressive personnel security program had pushed several qualified people out of government, and discouraged talented individuals from applying. Furthermore, several cases related to the federal employee loyalty program had made their way to the Supreme Court. Although some of the Supreme Court’s earlier decisions had favored a more stringent security policy, the Supreme Court now shifted toward favoring the civil and individual rights of U.S. Government employees. In addition, McCarthy’s influence effectively ended in December 1954, when his Senate colleagues censured him for “conduct unbecoming” a Senator.<sup>58</sup>

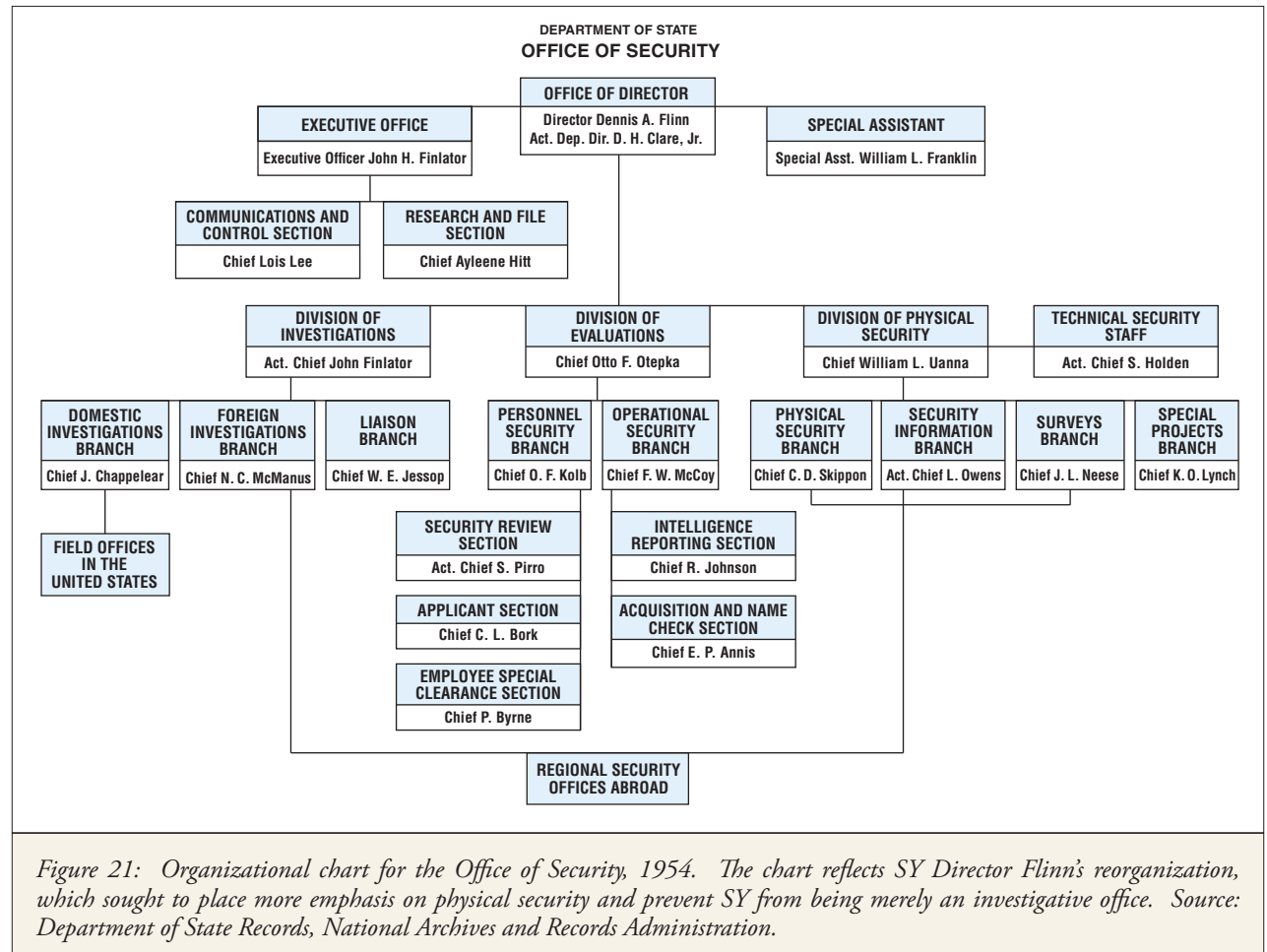


Figure 21: Organizational chart for the Office of Security, 1954. The chart reflects SY Director Flinn’s reorganization, which sought to place more emphasis on physical security and prevent SY from being merely an investigative office. Source: Department of State Records, National Archives and Records Administration.



*Figure 22: SY Director Dennis Flinn (left) with Jack Minor, Chief of the Division of Investigations. The dots on the map behind Flinn show the locations of U.S. embassies that have Regional Security Officers. To the right of Flinn's finger is the dot for the U.S. Embassy in Cairo. Flinn added more than 25 Security Officers (Technical) [SO(T)s] as part of his effort to improve overseas security. Source: Department of State Records, National Archives and Records Administration.*

McLeod continued to call for more stringent reviews and investigations of Department of State personnel; however, he inadvertently undermined his ability to undertake “constant vigilance” and “continuing action” when he announced, in 1955, that full field investigations had been completed on all 11,000 employees of the Department of State. Since Congress had earmarked special funds for this task, and the Civil Service Commission had loaned several evaluators to SY for this undertaking, McLeod’s funding and staff levels decreased. The SCA Administrator found himself in the awkward position of having to scramble for permanent staff and appropriations to continue his work at the same level he had mustered in earlier years. McLeod then faced strong criticism from one survey group that charged that personnel security had siphoned resources away from other security responsibilities,

such as protection, training, management, and physical security. Facing an increasingly critical Congress and U.S. public, he soon left SCA, and in 1957, he accepted assignment as Ambassador to Ireland.<sup>59</sup>

### *Courier, Hero, Smuggler, Spy*

While McCarthyism focused public attention upon the internal affairs of the Department of State, the Cold War prompted U.S. officials to worry that the Communists and their allies might exploit diplomatic immunities and customs to engage in espionage or gain an advantage over the United States. The Department of State and other federal agencies extensively reviewed courier routes, diplomatic baggage, and the ease with which Soviet bloc diplomats bought American technology and obtained U.S. Government publications. Cold War fears enveloped basic diplomatic courtesies and fostered anxieties as U.S. officials became aware of the multiple avenues that the Soviets could exploit and of how few security measures actually existed in the United States.

Although the U.S. courier system was largely a post-World War II development, diplomatic couriers emerged as Cold War spies *and* Cold War security threats. In the 1950s, couriers gained something of a heroic mystique. Actor Cesar Romero played Steve McQuinn, a suave, resourceful U.S. diplomatic courier in a short-lived television series *Passport to Danger*. In episodes exotically titled “Tangiers,” “Monte Carlo,”



and “Prague,” McQuinn experienced harrowing adventures and fended off enemy agents while delivering important documents to U.S. allies. Reality occasionally proved just as dramatic. In 1955, courier Frank Irwin was aboard a Yugoslav airliner that crashed outside Vienna. Irwin survived, but suffered internal injuries and third degree burns over a large portion of his body. Despite his injuries, Irwin refused to relinquish control of his diplomatic pouches and declined painkillers until a U.S. Embassy officer arrived on the scene to take control of the classified materials.<sup>60</sup>

In 1955, SY Director Dennis Flinn learned that Department officials had allowed the U.S. Army to use the Department’s Iron Curtain courier routes as a training ground for its intelligence officers. In 1947, the Department and the Army had negotiated an agreement that allowed six intelligence officers from the Army’s intelligence school in Regensburg, West Germany, to serve as diplomatic couriers on the Paris-Moscow route. Under the program, an intelligence officer was paired with a courier for the June through January “run.” The purpose was to give intelligence officers specializing in the Soviet Union an opportunity to see the country, observe conditions, and use the language. U.S. Embassy officials in Moscow agreed; however, the Department insisted that Regensburg couriers refrain from conducting intelligence activities, and that the Army brief its officers accordingly. After just two months (October 1947), the program worked so well that it was expanded to encompass courier routes in all Iron Curtain nations, and the program continued until February 1955.<sup>61</sup>



*Figure 23: Actor Cesar Romero with Actress Betty Furness, 1950. Romero played “Steve McQuinn,” a diplomatic courier, in the short-lived 1950s television series, Passport to Danger. Each week Romero’s character McQuinn fended off enemy agents in exotic locales as he delivered classified documents to U.S. posts overseas. Source: © Associated Press.*



*Figure 24: Diplomatic Courier Ray Irwin (on stretcher) is brought back to the United States for medical attention. Irwin was on an airplane that crashed in 1955. Despite his injuries, Irwin kept control of his pouches and refused painkillers until a U.S. Embassy officer arrived to take possession of the pouches. Source: Department of State, Office of the Historian Files.*

The State-Army courier arrangement fell apart over security clearances. Flinn learned that unlike official Department of State couriers, the Army intelligence officers serving as couriers did not obtain their clearances from SY. SY officials investigated the program and discovered that Army intelligence officers had committed several courier violations, including photographing Soviet installations, recording serial numbers of Soviet naval vessels, writing down license plate numbers of official Soviet vehicles, and entering “lengthy and heated discussions” with foreign officials and military officers. As a result of SY’s investigation, Department officials became convinced that the Army trainees would never divorce themselves from intelligence activities, and feared that the United States could lose its pouch services behind the Iron Curtain if the program became known. The Department of State terminated the program, and staffed all courier routes with Department-appointed and supervised couriers.<sup>62</sup>

U.S. officials meanwhile imposed restrictions upon Soviet couriers. The Eisenhower Administration insisted that Soviet couriers make travel arrangements in advance and follow predetermined routes cleared by U.S. officials. In 1954, Soviet bloc couriers bearing passports were restricted to New York City; Dallas, Texas (air travel only); Syracuse, New York (air only); Laredo, Texas (rail only); and St. Albans, Vermont (rail only). Customs officials strongly preferred that the Soviets send unaccompanied pouches to the U.S. Government’s receiving facilities in New York or Georgetown. U.S. officials admitted that the pouch’s consignee could “intercept the shipment

to him anywhere en route and take possession of it,” but U.S. Customs officials insisted that requiring Soviet pouches to be shipped in bond to New York or Georgetown would increase security.<sup>63</sup>

U.S. officials also worried about the baggage of Communist bloc diplomats. Diplomatic courtesy dictated that diplomatic pouches and a diplomat’s baggage were not to be inspected upon entering or departing the nation to which he or she was assigned. Diplomatic custom further stipulated that there was no weight limit on a diplomat’s baggage, effects, or pouches. A diplomat’s bag could be a small suitcase, or large containers weighing thousands of pounds. Similarly, a diplomatic pouch could consist of a single paper envelope, a leather canvas bag, or a gigantic crate. Neither U.S. Customs nor the Department of State officials tracked the size, weight, or number of pouches or pieces of diplomatic baggage entering the country.<sup>64</sup>



*Figure 25: Diplomatic Courier Vincent Cella watches Department of State pouches being loaded on a plane. During the 1950s, U.S. officials became increasingly worried about the security risks posed by diplomatic pouches. They feared that the Soviets and their allies might smuggle an atomic weapon into the United States or steal U.S. technology. U.S. officials debated the concerns of security versus the long-held diplomatic privilege of the inviolability of pouches. Source: Department of State Records, National Archives and Records Administration.*

Concerns over transfers of U.S. technology to the Soviet Union generated new worries regarding diplomatic pouches, parcels, and baggage. SY raised concerns when Rumanian diplomatic officials purchased fifty two-way radios and one master radio station. The Hungarians also made several purchases of electronic equipment. The National Security Council (NSC) took up the matter in November 1953.<sup>65</sup> The Department of State's Bureau of Administration soon developed specific regulations for the handling and inspection of the baggage for each Iron Curtain nation. For example, there would be no inspection of the baggage for Soviet diplomats, a "pro forma" inspection of Czech bags, and a "thorough" search of the Rumanians' baggage. Procedures varied for diplomatic baggage arriving in the United States unaccompanied, and all regulations and procedures were subject to change.<sup>66</sup>

U.S. officials also became concerned that Communist couriers and diplomats might smuggle atomic materials into the United States, perhaps even detonate an atomic bomb within U.S. borders. The Government's Interdepartmental Committee on Internal Security (ICIS) in 1952 pointed directly to the inviolability of diplomatic pouches as a potential security hazard, and suggested modifying diplomatic immunity regarding pouches and baggage, much to the opposition of the Department of State.<sup>67</sup> Amidst Cold War tensions, the Department had sought to maintain a balance between ensuring security and preserving diplomatic immunities, customs and conventions. The Department determined that international law did not strictly prohibit the inspection of diplomatic baggage and pouches if suspicion of illegal activity existed. The Department's Legal Adviser admitted that there was little legal precedent on the issue, but suggested that if U.S. officials suspected a pouch contained illegal materials, the recommended course would be to request that the person accompanying the shipment (or if the shipment was unaccompanied, an appropriate officer of the pertinent embassy) open the container in the presence of U.S. Customs officials. The Legal Adviser did caution against this, noting that there were tangible, mutual advantages for the United States and the Soviet Union to maintain the



*Figure 26: Diplomatic Courier Ward Christensen displays his many passport visas (circa 1954). Christensen subsequently served as chief of the Courier Service's regional offices in Cairo, Manila, and Frankfurt; Regional Security Officer for Scandinavia; and Chief of Consular Services in Port-au-Prince. While serving in Haiti, Christensen and U.S. Ambassador Clinton Knox were held captive by Haitian militants for 20 hours in 1973 before the militants exchanged them for political prisoners. Christensen retired from the Department in 1976. Source: Bureau of Diplomatic Security Files.*



existing practice. If the United States curbed a specific immunity enjoyed by foreign diplomats on U.S. soil, U.S. diplomats risked losing that same immunity abroad. Moreover, compromising diplomatic immunity might interfere with U.S. diplomatic efforts overseas.<sup>68</sup>

Despite the Department's cautions, ICIS continued to press for a program to screen incoming diplomatic pouches for radioactive material. ICIS Subcommittee members rationalized that if U.S. officials could inspect diplomatic luggage or pouches without the international community's knowledge, U.S. security would be protected and diplomatic relations preserved. By 1954, ICIS had obtained detection equipment and soon afterwards implemented a screening program. The AEC developed devices to detect sheathed plutonium and unsheathed uranium in baggage and shipments. The ICIS planned their first test run of the new technology at New York's Idlewild Airport, where specially trained inspectors would direct the baggage of Soviet diplomats through a designated passageway. Despite its dislike of, even opposition to, the program, the Department did obtain assurance that it would be consulted should such an event occur. SCA also asked the Bureau of European Affairs for advice on appropriate courses of action should fissionable material be found. In previous encounters, Soviet, Czech, and Polish delegations to the United Nations had strongly protested the inspection of their luggage, lodged formal complaints, and threatened to rescind the principle of reciprocity for U.S. diplomats. Further impetus for inspection occurred in October 1955, when detectors discovered a Czech courier carrying radioactive material. By 1957, U.S. Customs officers regularly searched diplomats and their effects covertly at specified test sites outfitted with fluoroscopic equipment.<sup>69</sup>

On March 3, 1958, President Eisenhower signed NSC Action 1868, approving a pilot inspection program. NSC Action 1868 required the Secretary of State to devise procedures for U.S. personnel to follow when substantial radioactivity was detected in a diplomatic pouch or shipment. Department representatives on the ICIS, however, learned that the detection devices could not confirm whether the item in a diplomatic pouch was dangerous or innocuous. Certain luminous clocks, for example, could give out a substantial radioactive reading, but a properly shielded fissionable item might generate a negligible reading. Without a more solid guarantee of the presence of fissionable material in pouches or luggage, senior Department officials hesitated to support an action that might jeopardize diplomatic relations. By the end of 1958, the NSC had to reexamine and refine its definition of what constituted substantial radioactivity.<sup>70</sup>

The Eisenhower Administration placed restrictions upon Soviet bloc diplomats. U.S. officials required that Communist diplomats request and obtain authorization before travelling in the United States, and in 1956, the requirement was modified to 24-hour advance notice. Such requests had to include destinations, routes, and overnight stays. Some areas of the United States were closed to Soviet bloc travellers altogether. As Department officials made clear to Rumanian diplomats, such restrictions were largely retaliatory, and only occurred because U.S. diplomats faced similar restrictions in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.<sup>71</sup> For example, when the Rumanian Government denied travel by U.S. diplomats outside of the capital city (Bucharest), the Department imposed a similar ban upon Rumanian diplomats in Washington and at the United Nations in New York.<sup>72</sup>



Perhaps one of the most vexing security issues regarding Iron Curtain diplomats involved not classified, but unclassified materials. SY and other U.S. Government security officials were keenly aware of the ease with which a Soviet diplomat could obtain U.S. maps, diagrams, and information. U.S. Government publications, nautical charts, topographical maps, aerial photographs, and detailed city and industry plans were readily available upon request to any interested foreign national. Equally troubling to U.S. officials was that Communist diplomats often did not identify themselves, evaded questions about their identity, or offered misleading statements when obtaining information from federal, state, local government sources. Moreover, U.S. diplomats did not have comparable access to such charts, maps, publications, and photographs from their Communist host governments. The Kremlin even distributed a pamphlet to the Soviet public titled “Preservation of State Secrets,” in order to encourage Soviet citizens to deny unclassified information to the Americans.<sup>73</sup>

In October 1956, the NSC issued NSC-5427, titled “Restricting Diplomatic and Official Representatives of Soviet Bloc Countries in the United States in Connection with Strategic Intelligence.” NSC-5427 banned the photographing or sketching of numerous facilities, such as military equipment, power plants, tunnels, seaports, hydroelectric dams, and radio stations. It also barred the Soviets from purchasing aerial photographs, navigational or hydrographic maps, development plans of industrial cities, or maps or charts with a scale larger than 1:250,000. Publicly released, the regulations sought to enlist the American public in helping to keep “strategic intelligence” out of Communist hands. Upon the NSC’s recommendation, the Office of Strategic Information in the Department of Commerce coordinated Soviet bloc requests for unclassified information from U.S. Government agencies. As Department of State officials admitted in a Departmental circular, they sought to ensure that exchanges of information and intelligence with the Soviet Union and Eastern bloc nations were “reciprocal in character and...result in an advantageous return to the United States.”<sup>74</sup>



*Figure 27: A Department of State Diplomatic Courier (right) delivers pouched items to a U.S. Embassy Paris officer on the airport tarmac late one evening in 1957. Airline travel sharply increased the speed and frequency with which the Department communicated with its posts. The courier likely left Washington, D.C., about noon and was perhaps delivering memoranda written and signed that morning. Source: Bureau of Diplomatic Security Files.*

## *Protecting Diplomats and Dignitaries*



*Figure 28: Protecting Royal Visitors. President Dwight D. Eisenhower welcomes Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie (left foreground) to the White House in May 1954, while SY Special Agent John F. McDermott (left rear, partly hidden behind the Emperor) looks on. Source: Private collection.*

A long-observed diplomatic custom stipulated that host governments were required to take appropriate action to protect foreign diplomats and visiting heads of state. The U.S. Congress formalized this host duty in Title 18, Section 112 of the U.S. Code. The laws imposed strict fines, even imprisonment, on those found guilty of assaulting a visiting official, and tasked SY with the responsibility to protect heads of state and the Secretary of State. The Division of Physical Security initially performed the protective duties, but, in 1953, they were transferred to the new Division of Protective Security. The division worked closely with the Protocol staff who organized the logistics of foreign dignitary visits.<sup>75</sup>

The law, however, did not grant SY Special Agents the authority to carry firearms. The Department tried to remedy the discrepancy in 1954 by petitioning Congress, arguing that dignitaries were “entitled to

special protection, something more than is normally accorded to private individuals.” Department officials also noted that while Congress had criminalized the assault of a public official, it had not conferred on SY Special Agents any authority or special powers to protect diplomatic officials. SY Agents regarded the authority to carry firearms as crucial to carrying out their protective assignments, and they pointed out that the law permitted the agents of other agencies to do so (e.g. the Secret Service). By 1953, SY Agents often carried their own weapons during protective assignments, despite the lack of liability protection.<sup>76</sup>

On June 28, 1955, Congress rectified the discrepancy and approved Public Law 104. The law stated that Department of State employees specially designated by the Secretary of State could “carry firearms for the purpose of protecting heads of foreign states, high officials of foreign government and other distinguished visitors to the United States, the Secretary of State, and the Under Secretary of State, and official representatives of foreign governments and of the United States attending international conferences, or performing special missions.” By extension, the law granted official immunity to Special Agents should they accidentally shoot or otherwise injure an innocent bystander in the course of executing their protective duties.<sup>77</sup>

Obtaining legal permission to carry firearms was representative of SY's efforts in the 1950s to formalize its protective details, most notably the Secretary of State's protective detail. SY's Division of Physical Security protected the Secretary, and Special Agents assigned to the Secretary's detail attended Secret Service classes on dignitary protection in order to ensure adherence to standard procedures. SY initially assigned two agents to the Secretary, but Secretaries Dean Acheson, John Foster Dulles, Christian A. Herter, and Dean Rusk often determined the size and extent of their protective details. Although SY Agents escorted the Secretary to and from home each day (called "portal to portal" coverage), SY's protective detail did not offer 24-hour protection. Once the Secretary left the Department for the day, he did not necessarily receive protection if he made public appearances at night.<sup>78</sup>

The Secretary's travels, however, were another matter. In 1953, before Secretary Dulles arrived in New York City to deliver his address to the UN General Assembly, Special Agents from SY's New York City Field Office conducted a technical search of Dulles's quarters at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. They ensured that the suite contained appropriate equipment for storing classified material and contained no listening devices, and then upon his arrival, guarded the Secretary throughout his visit to New York. A uniformed police officer, assigned by SY, guarded the entrance to the Secretary's suite around the clock. Standard procedure for Secretary Dulles's overseas travels included one SY agent travelling with the Secretary, and one flying ahead to ensure that rooms and security were ready for him when he arrived.<sup>79</sup>



*Figure 29: SY Special Agent James McDermott (left rear, in light colored overcoat and felt hat) follows closely while protecting Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom in October 1957. The Queen is departing the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., with Presiding Bishop Henry Knox Sherrill (center) and President Dwight D. Eisenhower (right). Source: Department of State.*



*Figure 30: SY Special Agents (standing) on duty prepare for the cornerstone laying ceremony for the Department of State's new structure, now known as the Harry S Truman Building, located at 2201 C Street NW. Source: Department of State / Albert N. Abajian.*



After four Puerto Rican nationalists opened fire in the House of Representatives on March 1, 1954, SY reassessed its protective measures for the Secretary. It heightened security at the Secretary's office, because almost anyone could walk right into the Secretary of State's office with little, if any, interference. SY limited access to the Secretary's office to a single entrance, placed a security guard there to monitor individuals, and installed an alarm button for the guard to push at any sign of trouble. The alarm button automatically closed the door to the Secretary's office. SY explored obtaining a vehicle with armor plating and bulletproof glass for the Secretary, elevating security at the Secretary's residence, and adding an overnight police foot patrol outside the Secretary's home. SY also maintained a two-man security detail at all of the Secretary's appearances and public meetings.<sup>80</sup> When SY learned that Puerto Rican nationalists might target Dulles during his visit to that island, it recommended that agents guard Dulles at all public appearances and accompany him home. SY temporarily increased security for the Secretary to 24-hour protection in November 1956 when Dulles was hospitalized for cancer treatment. Because of an expressed threat of poison, SY required the nurse on duty to test all food 30 minutes prior to serving it to the Secretary.<sup>81</sup>

### *Conclusion*

McCarthyism and the Cold War defined diplomatic security and set the course of the Office of Security throughout the decade of the 1950s. McCarthy's Wheeling, West Virginia speech triggered a series of hearings, investigations, and reports of Communists infiltrating the Department of State. Department officials testified before Congress to rebut McCarthy's accusations, but one official's testimony prompted a purge of homosexuals from the Department. McCarthyism also initiated greater attention to overseas security. The same Congressional committee that conducted hearings on Communists in the Department also appointed the Subcommittee of Two to study physical security at U.S. Embassies overseas. Senators Green and Lodge issued a report that strongly urged the Department to improve and expand overseas security, and they were also willing to provide positions and funds to do so. Department officials, long criticized by Congress for a lack of



*Figure 31: Special Agent James M. McDermott (standing left, rear) provides security for Secretary of State Christian Herter (seated on left) during his visit with Mayor Willy Brandt in West Berlin on July 25, 1959. Source: Private collection.*



security, did not fully recognize the Senators' willingness to provide additional resources for security. Director Dennis Flinn restructured SY in order to provide better management and attention to overseas security. The discovery of the Great Seal bug in the U.S. Embassy in Moscow and the revamping of the Marine Security Guard program were further developments in a shift toward better security at U.S. posts abroad.

The Cold War also shaped diplomatic security during the 1950s. Concerns about Soviet bloc espionage and exploitation of diplomatic courtesies led U.S. officials to reexamine diplomatic customs and immunities. U.S. Government officials studied and debated the threats posed by diplomatic pouches and baggage, and took measures to prevent the transfer of U.S. technology and information to the Soviet Union. Department officials increased and formalized protection of the Secretary of State. By the end of the decade, diplomatic security was viewed as vital, and SY had emerged as an essential office in the Department. The 1960s, however, would reveal that the Department's improvement and expansion of measures to promote security were insufficient for the threats they faced.

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